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Testimony on HB1267 – Patuxent Research Refuge and Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) – Zoning Classification (Protecting Patuxent Research Refuge Act) Position: Support

The City of Greenbelt respectfully submits this testimony in support of House Bill 1267. House Bill 1267 would require the appropriate local zoning authority to designate and maintain the Patuxent Research Refuge and the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) in a zoning classification that restricts uses under specified circumstances. The City supports this legislation because it helps ensure long-term protection of two irreplaceable public assets that provide significant environmental, scientific, and community benefits for Prince George's County and the State of Maryland.

The Patuxent Research Refuge and the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center serve as critical anchors for conservation, habitat protection, research, and open space. These lands contribute to regional environmental quality, stormwater and watershed health, and the overall character of surrounding communities. Ensuring that local zoning classifications remain consistent with these protective purposes provides greater certainty and guards against incremental land-use changes that could undermine the long-term value of these resources.

The Beltsville Agricultural Research Center functions as a large federal research campus that includes a mix of agricultural, research, industrial-support, open-space, and forested lands. As policymakers consider long-term protections for these important public assets, the City believes it is important to preserve the significant open-space and forest resources associated with BARC while also acknowledging the existing mix of uses on the campus and the need for thoughtful planning should federal land use ever evolve in the future.

The City supports clear policy direction that protects major public conservation and research lands from incompatible uses. A zoning framework that reinforces protective classifications helps align local land-use decisions with the long-standing public purposes of these properties and the broader public interest. Additionally, granting municipalities greater authority around local zoning matters would significantly help to enforce the goals of this legislation.

For these reasons, the City of Greenbelt respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 1267.

For more information, please contact City Manager Josué Salmerón at 301-474-8000 or jsalmeron@greenbeltmd.gov.